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Somebody robbing your pharmacy blind?
Patterson introduces bills to target drug embezzlement

LANSING—Could somebody, working at your local pharmacy, take prescription medications out of inventory to resell on the black market? Brownstown Detective Sgt. Thomas Dayfield confronted exactly such a scene not long ago.

 "The law was not on my side," said Dayfield. "Under current law, this crime was only a misdemeanor."

Despite the serious nature of this crime, conviction does not carry stiff penalties. Under federal law, "prescription medication" is not a controlled substance. Detective Dayfield brought the matter to state Sen. Bruce Patterson's attention for a remedy.

Patterson promptly introduced Senate Bills 1212 and 1213. They will make such theft a felony. The legislation was immediately assigned for hearings.

"These bills address a gap in the law," said David Gorcyca, Oakland County Prosecutor, speaking on behalf of the Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan. "They will have a deterrent effect, and, if necessary, punish employees who steal and sell prescription drugs. Simple theft penalties are not sufficient to address this problem. Senator Patterson is making a much-needed clarification."

The Michigan Pharmacists Association also strongly endorsed the legislation.

"We support Sen. Patterson and see this as an important step toward establishing a proper mechanism for law enforcement," said Greg Baran, MPA spokesman. "We look forward to working with Sen. Patterson and seeing his bills become law."

Patterson said his legislation provides important protections for residents of the state.

 "Consumers are hurt by these thefts," said Patterson. "Black-market transactions undermine public health, and they raise costs to legitimate prescription holders. This hurts real people, everyday citizens, like you and me."

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